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ABSTRACT

San Diego State University (California) has developed a coach-of-coaches model of providing support, assistance, and supervision to intern-teachers in its rural special education alternative credential program. Coaches, who are fully credentialed teachers with supervisory skills, make a minimum of nine direct and indirect (video analysis) observations of the interns each year during the 2-year program. Coaches receive back-up support from the university's Intern Support Liaison (ISL), who serves as coach and supervisor to the coaches. Every 4-6 weeks the ISL meets with the coaches for a half-day to review intern progress, identify difficulties, and problem-solve. Video segments from selected interns are reviewed, with the ISL assisting coaches in refining their observation skills, identifying areas for intern improvement, and providing training in coaching/mentoring. Following these meetings, the ISL holds an intern seminar in which segments of intern videos are reviewed and teaching behaviors are analyzed. Needs identified in these meetings form the basis for future seminars and all-day "fast track" workshops that provide intensive training in identified areas of need. A teacher observation form is used by the intern and coach to evaluate instructional time, student responses, consequences, and seven additional factors associated with effective instructional delivery. The program has resulted in full certification of over 60 percent of current special education teachers in a vast, geographically isolated desert region of southern California. Retention rates of both teachers and coaches are high. (Contains 28 references.) (TD)

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THE COACH-OF-COACHES MODEL FOR PREPARING RURAL SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Chronic shortages of fully qualified special education teachers thwart efforts to deliver appropriate educational programs to students with disabilities. These shortages have been described as substantial, durable and national in scope (Boe, Cook, Kaufman, & Danielson, 1996) and are due to insufficient production of new special education teachers as well as the relatively high turnover rate of special education teachers. As a result, special education, more than any other area of education, has high numbers of teachers who lack full qualification and are transitional in nature. These problems are particularly acute in regions that are rural and/or sparsely populated – descriptors that describe approximately two-thirds of the nation's school districts (Hicks, 1994). While "ruralness" is primarily defined in terms of low population density, rural districts also may be isolated due to geographic barriers (e.g., mountains, desert terrain) and may be characterized by populations that are predominantly poor, minority, immigrant, and/or migrant.

The challenges involved in obtaining qualified special education teachers in rural regions are immense. It has not proved productive to address rural shortages through urban-based preparation programs that have the goal, hope and/or expectation that the new teachers will either accept or remain in jobs in sparsely populated regions. Most teacher candidates in special education prefer to teach in suburban communities (Bell, Bull, Barrett, Montgomery, & Hyle, 1993). Further, urban-based programs seldom prepare candidates for local community values. Nor do they include specific concepts and competencies about service delivery in rural regions (Carr, 1995; Cole & Leeper, 1995). Further, urban-prepared new teachers often have difficulty adjusting to the social relationships and cultural values of rural regions (Muse & Thomas, 1992). A much more productive approach to responding to rural teacher shortages has proved to be the preparation of individuals who reside in the community (Alvarado & Cegelka, in press; Bornfield, Hall, Hall, & Hoover, 1997). "Commitment to place" has been identified as the singularly most important factor in the retention of rural special educators (Bell, et al, 1993; Gamble, 1995; Muse & Thomas, 1992; Wei, Shapero, & Boggess, 1993).

In recognition of the benefits of preparing local people as special education teachers, urban universities have responded by placing credential programs in rural regions, frequently relying on adjunct faculty of unknown or indifferent quality and providing limited control of program quality or fidelity (Helge & Mars, 1982). Over the past decade, increasing numbers of technologically-based distance-education models have been developed; these incorporate various combinations of satellite course delivery, compressed video-disc delivery, and on-site delivery of instruction (Howard, Ault, Knowlton, & Swall, 1992; Collins, 1997; Ludlow, 1994). Often these programs are designed primarily for uncertified in-service teachers and employ some form of alternative certification, often in partnership with the district(s) in which the teachers are employed.

Regardless of the delivery structure of these programs, a major drawback has been the difficulties inherent in providing adequate arena-of-reality practica in actual rural classrooms. The geographic distance between the university and the rural community can make the time requirements and transportation costs for campus-based supervisors prohibitive, leading to supervision that is infrequent and of questionable quality. This is problematic given that the field-based or practica portions of teacher preparation programs are widely viewed as the critical bridge between theory and practice (Welch & Kukic, 1988). To assure that this bridging occurs requires that there be systematic supervision and support that involves frequent observation, feedback, and guided practice (Englemann, 1988). This level of support that can be particularly difficult to attain when teacher preparation is occurring within

the context of distance education. Various forms of peer-coaching have evolved as one means of providing high quality support and assistance to in-service teachers whether or not they hold credentials.

Overview of Paper

Our program utilized a form of peer coaching to develop a coach-of-coaches model of providing support, assistance, and supervision to Intern teachers in their own classrooms within the context of a rural special education alternative credential program. The rural special education credential program has been offered for over 10 years by San Diego State University through a combination of U.S. Office of Special Education programs grant money, district and county funding, university instructional budgets, and more recently, state Internship Credential monies. Initially conceptualized primarily as a program for emergency-permit teachers, over the past seven years it has evolved into an Internship Credential model as described in detail in the *Rural Special Education Quarterly* (Cegelka & Alvarado, in press). The alternative Internship Credential permits personnel without California certification to serve as classroom teachers for a maximum of two years during which time they must complete all credential requirements. These two years as fully-paid provisionally certified teachers count toward salary increments and tenure credit. During each semester of their Internship Credential program, they receive support, assistance and supervision from both the university and the districts while enrolled in an approved preparation program at a university. The rural special education Internship Credential program described here has resulted in full certification of over 60% of the region's current special education teachers, with teacher attrition being quite low (less than 15% total over six years). A key feature of this program has been its coach-of-coaches model which was developed to address both the geographic and fiscal barriers to providing support and supervision to teachers-in-training across this 4,300 square mile region. With a ratio of two to three Interns for each unit of faculty workload, plus the disincentive of traveling great distances to provide in-class support, it was essential that an alternative approach to support and supervision be developed if the program was to be affordable and effective. The coach-of-coaches model we developed reduces the practica costs to approximately one-fifth the cost of traditional approaches and it does so with no apparent loss of program quality. The district coaches, the regional support staff, and the university Intern Support Liaison ((ISL) function together in a single system of beginning special education teacher support and assistance based on continuous assessment of Intern needs over the entire four semesters of program participation. This paper describes the key elements of the coach-of-coaches model and delineates the observation system that serves as a common vehicle for analysis of teaching by the Interns, their coaches, and the university Practica Support Liaison.

Coach-of-Coaches Model

Too often teachers are left to their own devices when it comes to translating theories and skills that they learn in university courses into actual classroom practice; they develop their teaching approaches and deal with classroom problems in isolation (Englert & Tarrant, 1997). This is particularly a problem for novice teachers who are may be more focused on day-to-day survival rather than improving their instructional delivery. The quality of mentoring provided new teachers, including teachers working toward full certification, is critical to their professional development as well as their retention as teachers. New teachers for whom clear expectations and goals are set and who receive specific, constructive feedback on their actual teaching practices tend to experience early success as teachers, a self-efficacy factor that is itself predictive of long-term teacher retention (Chapman & Green, 1986; DeYoung, 1991; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Coaching has been found to be an effective strategy for developing instructional skills (Gersten, Morvant, & Brengelman, 1995). Preparing local educators with supervisory skills has been documented as an effective approach for supervising rural teachers-in-training (Billingsley & Jones, 1993). The coaching program described here was specifically designed to assist provisionally credentialed novice teachers in translating the skills of effective teaching into the day-to-day practice of their own classrooms. The program reduced their isolation as new teachers by involving them in a community of professional development and support designed to improve instructional practice and to lead to full certification.

In our program, coaches are fully-credentialed teachers selected jointly by the districts and the university. Following the initial three to four years of program implementation, almost all of the coaches have themselves been recent graduates of the Internship Credential program. Whenever possible, the coach is a teacher at the same school as the Intern, although sometimes the coach is from another school or even a neighboring district. The coaches make

a minimum nine direct and indirect (i.e., video analysis) observations of the Interns each year. They receive back-up support from two regional program specialists as well as from the university's Intern Support Liaison (ISL). The ISL serves as coach and supervisor to the coaches and provides training to the coaches as well as to the regional program specialists. Every four to six weeks, the ISL meets with the coaches and program specialists for a half-day to review Intern progress and identify and problem-solve difficulties. As a group, they review video segments from selected Interns, with the ISL assisting coaches in refining their observation skills, identifying areas for Intern improvement, and providing training in coaching/mentoring. Immediately following these meeting, the ISL holds a two-hour Intern seminar in which segments of their videos are reviewed and Interns are guided in analyzing their own teaching behaviors. Needs identified in these meetings form the basis for future seminar meetings as well as all-day "Fast Track" workshops (up to four a year) that provide intensive training in identified areas of need. As instructor of both of the methods courses, the ISL was in an ideal position to work with the Interns to strengthen areas of weakness and to help the Interns bridge theory and practice

Videotaping Requirement

At the beginning of each year, the requirements and procedures for self-videotaping are reviewed. Interns are provided with instructions and forms for obtaining videotaping permission from parents/guardians. The university ISL also provides guidelines on how to obtain meaningful videotapes of their own teaching. They are encouraged to give careful thought and planning to the location of the camera, for accurate observation and recording depends on being able to see and hear both the teacher and the students. The ISL assures the interns that while teachers as well as students are inclined to behave differently in the camera's presence, this reactivity is usually short-lived. Once a camera is turned on and left in a stationary position, within in a fairly brief time span, participants typically behave as though the camera was not there.

Both the interns and their coaches receive explicit systematic instruction on evaluating their teaching within the context of the effective instruction paradigm. This paradigm is emphasized in both methods courses, so it is familiar to the Interns as well as their coaches. The ISL introduces, reviews, and provides guided practice on the direct observation form utilized for data collection. The Teacher Observation Form, developed over a the past decade by The Institute for Effective Education in San Diego, provides a fairly simple direct observation tool for monitoring teaching behaviors–either in oneself or in others. While it can be used in real-time observations, there are significant benefits to using the tool on videotaped lessons. Obviously, videotaping provides a feasible means to collect data on one's own behavior as well as for long-distance monitoring by a coach or university supervisor. Videotaped segments of teaching behavior can be reviewed privately, in supervision and/or training meetings. Not only can specific segments be replayed to check for observational accuracy, the videotape can be stopped while specific behaviors are analyzed and corrective actions recommended. Finally, videotape segments can document changes in teacher behaviors over time.

First semester Interns must record all three videotapes in the same subject area over the course of the semester. This makes it easier for them to identify changes in their teaching behaviors. The Intern reviews the entire 45-minute videotape and selects a 10 minute sample of teaching and analyzes it using the Teacher Observation Form. The Intern gives his/her coach a copy of the observation form and the Intern's coach reviews the full videotape, taking data on the same 10-minute video segment identified by the Intern. Typically, the coach and Intern then compare instructional observation data that they have collected and view the 10-minute videotape together to clear up any differences in data or to emphasize a particular behavior or set of behaviors that may need improvement. This occurs prior to the Intern's proceeding to the next videotaping assignment. The university ISL reviews individual videotapes at least once each semester and more frequently at the request of either the coach or the Intern. Through these processes, we determine whether the Intern's instructional skills are improving over time at an appropriate rate. If not, then more intensive one-on-one classroom intervention is provided for the Intern using a formal university-district collaborative support process (See Cegelka & Alvarado, in press).

Description of Observation Form

The Teacher Observation Form is designed to provide measures of key variables identified in the effective instruction literature (Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1992; Bickel & Bickel, 1986; Englert, 1983; Englert, Tarrant, & Mariage, 1995; and Lloyd, Forness, & Kavale, 1998). These include (a) time allocated for and time engaged in delivery of instruction, (b) frequency and accuracy of student responses (both individual and group), and (c) consequences (both positive and negative) for student responses, recorded separately for academic and social

behaviors. A number of additional effective instruction factors are rated in terms of quality/rate (high, medium, low) with which the Intern demonstrates them.

Instructional Data

Data is collected in three areas: instructional time, student academic responding, and consequences delivered by the teacher. Frequency data on student academic responding are analyzed relative to percent that are group versus individual responses. These data are also converted to responses rate per minute and percent of correct responses per minute. Data on consequences for student behaviors are analyzed to determine the relative number of positive consequences to all consequences. This is calculated by dividing the number of positive consequences by the total number of consequences and multiplying by 100.

Instructional Time. This basic information is gathered at the top of the form by recording information from the daily schedule or lesson plan and the actual start and stop time for the instruction. This data is most reliably collected during face-to-face observations, but can provide a useful reference for discussion between the intern and coach even when direct observation is not possible. The data permit the coach/supervisor to talk about whether sufficient academic time has been allocated and whether instruction actually occurred during the allocated time.

Student Responses. Both individual and student responses are recorded for the entire observation period. A slash indicates a correct response, a cross indicates an incorrect response, and a circle around a cross indicates that an error response was corrected by the teacher. Per minute responses can be calculated and comparisons made between correct responses per minute and incorrect responses per minute. Judgments can be made relative to the appropriateness of the response rate, and the "comments" sections next to the data summary lines provide an opportunity to recommend changes in teaching behaviors. Research has documented that high response rates are indicative of on-task behavior as well as student learning. This suggests that teachers should ask students to say, write or do something several times during each minute of the lesson. However, the optimal rate of student responses varies depending on the type of response (e.g., written responses will take longer) and the complexity of the responses (e.g., more time is required for answering an inferential comprehension question than for answering a literal comprehension question.). Student response data can indicate that instruction is at too easy or too difficult a level; it also provides an indication as to whether or not appropriate error-correction procedures are being employed by the Intern teacher.

Consequences. This measure evaluates what the teacher does just after student responses. Particular attention is given to the positive consequences the teacher provides for desirable (or "correct") student responding and to the negative consequences provided for undesirable (or "incorrect") student responding. The rule of thumb that we use is that there should be four positive consequences (e.g., praise statements) for every negative consequence (e.g., a rule reminder or a penalty of some sort). We record data separately for consequences to academic and social behaviors so that we can insure that this 4:1 ratio maintains for both categories of behaviors. Experience has shown us that our Intern teachers are likely to provide very high rates of positive consequences for academic behavior, but tend to ignore appropriate social behaviors. Instead, they respond primarily when social behavior is inappropriate, resulting in a low ratio of positive to negative consequences for social behaviors. However, the rate of positive consequences for academic behavior may be so high that the overall ratio of positives to negatives is still within the 4:1 range. By recording data separately, we can get a better picture of Intern performance for each category of behavior separately.

For positive consequences, we record praise statements as well a "other" modes of reinforcement (e.g., points, high-fives, thumbs up, etc.). **For negative consequences,** we record rule reminders separately from penalties (e.g., verbal scolding, token removal, time out, etc.). It is important to note that we view rule reminders as different from prompts. Rule reminders are responses to a failed occurrence of a behavior, and, as such, frequently turn into nags. Prompts are given as a part of a lesson to improve the likelihood of a given academic behavior. Hence, we do not view prompts as negative and do not record data on them. For each category of consequences, a box is provided where the recorder can write in examples of the consequences employed.

Other Effective Instruction Factors

The Instruction Observation Form also provides an opportunity to rate observer impressions of seven additional factors associated with effective instructional delivery. These factors are presented in the form of

questions to which the observer may respond "high," "medium," or "low," with space to make brief comments. The seven questions are:

- Are materials organized?
- Is transition time quick and smooth?
- Are students ready for the lesson?
- Is lesson delivered fluently?
- Are errors corrected immediately?
- Is independent work appropriate?
- Are other students monitored?

Comments Section

A section for comments is located at the bottom of the form and provides space for open-ended statements concerning observations made as well as for recommendations for improving instruction. Typically, the recommendations are based on data that was collected during the observation and is limited to one or two teaching behaviors that the observer feels are most critical at that point in time. These are the behaviors that the coach or university ISL will be particularly attentive to when viewing the next videotape.

Summary

The coach-of-coaches model is highly consistent with teacher retention recommendations found in the literature. Specifically, Peer supervision, or pairing new teachers with master teachers, has been widely recommended (Rosenholtz, 1989; Lemke, 1995; Miller & Sidebottom, 1985; Muse & Thomas, 1992; Billingsley & Jones, 1993) as has designing opportunities for the beginning teachers to interact with one another (Davis, 1987; Swift, 1984, Miller & Sidebottom, 1985). Another recommended strategy is to provide opportunities for expanding into new professional roles, such as mentoring (Theis-Sprinthall & Sprinthall, 1987). Given that so many of our Intern Credential teachers go on to become coaches may also contribute to the high retention rate (approximately 85%) for this program. Program coaches have given high ratings to the high levels of university-coach communications and to the quality of feedback that both coaches and interns receive and have indicated that their participation helps them to refine their own instructional expertise as well as to develop supervisory skills

The coach-of-coaches model has made it feasible to offer this university-based alternative credential program within a vast geographically isolated desert region of Southern California. This early and continuous mentoring appears to contribute to the early success of the participants as teachers, a factor in itself associated with high retention rates. Further, this support feature facilitates not only the professional development of the Intern teachers and the qualitative educational services for the children that they teach, but appears also to contribute to the retention of those who serve in coaching roles. An important thread that has tied these components together has been the focused monitoring made possible through the use of the Teacher Observation Form.

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